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## Oral Roberts: An American Life

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combined to destroy the historical ambience of George Washington's home. Charleston and New Orleans, for years bypassed by prosperity, presented the most genuine historical face, while Santa Fe in its nearly unanimous adoption of adobe, became by the mid-1920s "what it should have been: a place that would be what it never was" (299).

Jakle writes that North Americans, for the most part uneducated in geography, were ripe for the contrivances of packaged tourism and content with the stereotypes propagated in the popular culture. In the early part of the century the responsible and diligent tourist mixed pleasure and learning to grow and mature. "The irresponsible tourist did not grow, but only pleased, often learning little and keeping prejudices firmly intact. . . . [T]he coming of the automobile, with mass tourism following in its wake, obscured the values of responsible travel" (306).

This book is rich in detail, and in that richness, even more than in its theme, lies its value. Jakle has an eye for the apt quotation. His mastery of the literature of travel is awesome, as the 23-page bibliography attests. *The Tourist* is a pleasure to read. It tells us what we have lost as well as what we have gained in our quest for speed and autonomy in the automobile age.

LONGWOOD COLLEGE

ELIZABETH W. ETHERIDGE

*Oral Roberts: An American Life*, by David Edwin Harrell. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. xiv, 622 pp. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Since the end of World War II Oral Roberts has been campaigning among the American people. Americans, including Iowans, have responded to his campaigns with commitments that are as common as, and often much deeper than, the commitments inspired by the political campaigns of the same period. Yet scholars have not considered his life and work a suitable subject for scholarly scrutiny. Professor Harrell has now corrected that situation with this fine biography and institutional study.

The book is nicely balanced between chronological narrative and thematic structure. Part one (1918-1947) treats the obscure early years, when Roberts sensed that he was healed from a mild case of stuttering and an apparently severe case of tuberculosis and subsequently began his career as an evangelist and pastor in the Pentecostal Holiness church. In part two (1947-1960) Roberts launches his independent healing ministry with a series of tent revivals across the coun-

try; by the end of the period his revivals were rivaled only by those of Billy Graham. Part three (1960–1975) focuses on the struggles surrounding the founding, building, accrediting, and remarkable expansion of Oral Roberts University. These struggles continue in part four (1975–1985), as Roberts seeks to incorporate a hospital, medical school, and research complex, the infamous City of Faith, into his comprehensive ministry. Finally, in part five, Harrell offers a general assessment of the meaning of Roberts's message, his character, and the future of his ministry. At least one chapter in each part is devoted to Roberts's personal life and family crises, apart from which one cannot understand his public career.

Roberts's career is characterized by constantly broadening horizons. Beginning in the narrow, protected confines of the East Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness church, he eventually attracted a broad constituency among "mainstream" Protestants. Regionally, Roberts moved from a local and regional subculture to status as a national phenomenon by the time he was 25 years old. In the 1980s he was striking out more boldly than ever before into the international arena. Yet at the same time, he never really left behind his roots in eastern Oklahoma. The region left its stamp upon him, and his imprint on the region, especially on the city of Tulsa, is undeniable.

In keeping with the recent scholarly literature on American revivalism, Harrell emphasizes Roberts's technique, especially his important innovations. Claiming that "Roberts has influenced the course of modern Christianity as profoundly as any American religious leader," Harrell cites "his innovative use of the media, particularly television" (vii–viii). So it is surprising there is so little attention to the details of Roberts's use of television. Although Harrell does deal extensively with fund-raising techniques, he also warns readers that he did not have access to financial reports from the Roberts organization.

The book's most striking feature—and to many its most troubling one—is its obviously sympathetic portrayal of Roberts's character and achievements. Many readers might wish, as I often did, for more probing of the controversial aspects of Roberts's career. But whatever one might wish for on the basis of visceral feelings about Roberts and all that he seems to represent, Harrell's sympathetic portrayal represents, in fact, not only the book's most striking feature, but its major contribution as well. Journalistic muckrakers abound, especially in the wake of the media attention to recent scandals surrounding prominent evangelists, including Roberts himself. Unfortunately, serious scholars are no more inclined than journalists to shed their personal feelings of revulsion in an effort to expose the features that make figures such as Roberts appealing to millions of Americans. So Harrell's efforts to get

inside Roberts's movement while maintaining a scholarly objectivity are admirable.

All historians, but especially religious historians, face the tension between "inside" and "outside" ("objective") history. It is clear from this book and a previous one, *All Things Are Possible*, that few scholars, if any, know the pentecostal subculture inside and out the way Harrell does (though he is not, as *Newsweek* had it in a recent article on Roberts, a "devout Pentecostal"). Those who cannot distinguish among evangelicals, fundamentalists, pentecostals, and holiness folks have difficulty appreciating Roberts's taming influence on the pentecostal tradition.

Still, I occasionally thought Harrell went beyond the call of duty in his efforts to defend Roberts. I also thought he relied too heavily on sources within or obviously sympathetic to the Roberts camp, to the exclusion of more objective accounts. Perhaps this is because other sources are not available—a limitation Harrell acknowledges in the preface (xi). In any case, readers need to refer often to the notes, which unfortunately are printed at the back of the book.

Finally, one is left with the question of how representative Roberts is of anything—even his own constituency. Despite the subtitle, which remains an enigma to me, Harrell never—except in a brief reference in the preface—addresses this issue. Nevertheless, Harrell's fluid and compelling biography of this remarkable American life will open new worlds to many scholarly readers and others whose own subcultures are often and in many ways no less narrow and exclusive than Roberts's.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

MARVIN BERGMAN

*The End of American History: Democracy, Capitalism, and the Metaphor of Two Worlds in Anglo-American Historical Writing*, by David W. Noble. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. ix, 166 pp. Notes, index. \$25.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

David Noble's *The End of American History* is a complex, densely packed work that is at once a study of the historical profession in America and an examination of several central interpretations of American history and culture. Less than 150 pages of text, it nonetheless is multidimensional and resists easy summarization.

Thomas Kuhn and Gene Wise provide the organizational foundations of the book. Noble's subject is a major paradigm shift within the historical profession precipitated by the collapse of the progressive synthesis in the 1940s and 1950s. He also relies on important recent in-

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